



## CITY OF LODI

## COUNCIL COMMUNICATION

**AGENDA TITLE:** Creation of an Animal Shelter Task Force

**MEETING DATE:** September 20, 2000

**SUBMITTED BY:** Deputy City Manager

**RECOMMENDATION:** That Council create an Animal Shelter Task Force responsible for providing short and long-term recommendations regarding the City of Lodi Animal Shelter.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:** Citizens interested in improving the Lodi Animal Shelter (LAS) have recently approached the City of Lodi. As such, numerous meetings have been held with representatives from Animal Friends Connection, LAS volunteers, and Police and Administration staff members. The meetings have been extremely productive, however, it has become quite apparent that there are definitely long and short-term needs for the LAS. The needs vary and include operational as well as capital issues. Although a number of suggestions have already been addressed at the staff level, it seems appropriate that additional short-term needs and certainly long-term needs be discussed and evaluated with community members.

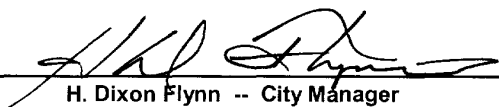
Additionally, the City is currently involved in the countywide regional study of animal shelter services in San Joaquin County. There is much interest on the part of Animal Friends Connection and LAS volunteers regarding the findings, recommendations, and outcomes of the study. This study is tentatively scheduled to be completed by November, 2000. It is expected that the newly created Task Force would review the study results and provide feedback to the City Council.

Staff recommends that the composition of the Task Force include representatives from:

- Animal Friends Connection
- Shelter volunteers
- Veterinarians
- Interested citizens
- Animal Services
- Police Administration
- City Manager's Office

Attached, as additional information is a letter from Animal Friends Connection advocating the creation of a Task Force. A staff report is also attached further describing the LAS and meeting results.

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_

  
H. Dixon Flynn -- City Manager



## CITY OF LODI

## COUNCIL COMMUNICATION

**FUNDING:** Not Applicable

Respectfully Submitted,

Janet S. Keeter  
Deputy City Manager

### Attachment

cc: Chief Jerry Adams  
Pat Sherman, Animal Friends Connection  
Barbara Steinheimer, Animal Friends Connection  
Sue Pixler, Lodi Citizen  
Dannis Bradshaw, LAS Volunteer

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_

H. Dixon Flynn -- City Manager



## ANIMAL FRIENDS CONNECTION

*Promoting Compassion Toward All Creatures*

Humane Education & Adoption Referrals

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(209) 365-0535

AUG 17 2000

August 15, 2000

Dear Lieutenant, Richard Dean:

In response to your request for a letter at the meeting on Thursday, August 3, 2000 regarding the Lodi Animal Shelter, Sue Pixler has not been representing nor acting on behalf of Animal Friends Connection. However, some of her ideas warrant further consideration.

Animal Friends Connection board of directors recommends that the city form a committee/task force to consider the current and future needs of the LAS. We suggest this committee consist of representatives from Animal Services, shelter volunteers, the City of Lodi, Lodi City council, Animal Friends Connection, a Veterinarian and interested citizens of the community including Sue Pixler.

Sincerely,

Patricia Sherman,  
President, Animal Friends Connection

c: City Manager, Dixon Flynn  
Deputy City Manager, Ms. Keeter  
Senior Animal Services officer, Terri Arbuckle  
Police Chief, Jerry Adams  
Public Works Director, Richard Prima  
Sue Pixler

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## **City of Lodi Animal Shelter - Administrative Staff Report**

**September 12, 2000**

Prepared by Janet S. Keeter, Deputy City Manager

In recent years, the City of Lodi's Animal Shelter has seen many changes that have resulted in a more pleasant environment for animal adoptions, for staff working conditions, and for a more pleasant stay for the animals. The changes have also increased the functionality of the facility while making it operationally more efficient. Changes include new computers, a new phone system, fresh interior paint, and music. In addition, volunteers have had a profound impact on the Shelter by providing staffing for longer office hours. The result is remarkable in contrast to past years during which time the Shelter was not as customer-friendly nor was it as comfortable for the animal population. Despite the physical, operational, and staffing changes, there is still much room for improvement. The **good** news is that the Shelter has earned itself a good reputation and more customers than ever are dropping off animals that are lost or in need of adoption. The **bad** news is that more customers than ever are dropping off animals that are lost or in need of adoption.

### **Shelter Background:**

The Animal Shelter was constructed in the 1960's and employed two animal control officers until recent hiring of a third part-time officer. The Shelter currently has 28 cat cages as a result of 8 new additional cat cages purchased in 1999. The Shelter has 24 dog cages, however there are no quarantine cages and only one partial isolation cage. New legislative requirements mandate that the City hold stray animals 6 days before euthanasia, 72 hours for ferrel cats, and 3 days for owner-released animals. As a result of an ever-increasing animal population, the Shelter is severely impacted by overcrowding, forcing euthanasia on a weekly basis. The Shelter is meeting the legal holding period, but is unable to extend longer stays in many instances due to space limitations. (Euthanasia statistics are available).

The issues that have now materialized as a result of the Shelter's popularity and its age are as follows:

### **Office hours:**

The Shelter is open from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Saturday. This precludes working individuals from stopping by the Shelter after work and on Sundays for adoptions.

### **Staffing:**

The staffing level at the Shelter has increased over the past few years, with the addition of a Part-Time Animal Services Officer. There has been no provision for clerical assistance or office help that hinders the Shelter hours open to the public. The volunteers help tremendously at the Shelter; however, they are not necessarily trained for adoption transactions when the Animal Services officers are responding to calls. The Shelter attracts a core of volunteers who can staff the office during certain periods, and others who are more transitional. It is not feasible to depend on the volunteers for set office hours. Records maintained by the Animal Services Officers demonstrate the rise in adoption rates when the front desk is staffed for public assistance.

**Marketing:**

The Shelter has a product to market, and that product is the adoption of and sheltering services for animals. It is imperative that the animals available for adoption are marketed as soon as possible, and for as long as possible. The Shelter does not have a marketing budget and must rely on outside sources such as the Lodi News Sentinel for advertising donations. The Animal Friends Connection does host 12 Pet Adoption Days throughout the year. The Internet can provide for a fresh venue to market the pets, however, the Shelter is not staffed to keep a web site current with the inventory of animals. This tool can entice citizens to visit the Shelter for possible adoptions, however this is only one component for a successful adoption.

**Overcrowding –Cats:**

The majority of the animals brought to the Shelter, or picked up by the Officers are felines. The Shelter has 28 cat cages and is required to hold the cats, unless adopted, a minimum of 6 days for strays, 72 hours for feral, and owner-released cats three days. The Shelter is meeting this legal requirement, but is severely overcrowded due to space constraints. In addition, the Shelter provides no quarantine areas resulting in the spread of diseases when a sick cat is introduced to the cages.

**Overcrowding – Dogs:**

The dog population in Lodi continues to grow and impacts the Shelter as more and more strays and abandoned dogs are brought to the facility. Dogs must share cages, which is challenging for staff to match compatible cage mates. In addition, the Shelter does not have a quarantine area for sick and diseased dogs, similar to the feline situation, resulting in the spread of kennel cough and parvo.

**Shelter Plumbing:**

The volunteers and staff spend at least 6 hours per day cleaning the cages which entails sweeping the dog feces into containers then washing down the kennels. The plumbing in the facility is antiquated and small in diameter making it unfeasible to simply wash down the kennels. This results in a much more labor-intensive and time-consuming cleaning process.

With the identification of issues came a list of suggested short-term solutions including hiring more staff, increasing hours open to the public, adding additional cat cages, adding isolation dog kennels, improving the overall facility such as plumbing, creating a Task Force, and improving the web page effort. After numerous meetings with various members of the Lodi Police Department, Animal Friends Connection, and private citizens, it became apparent that there is consensus on short-term solutions for the Shelter, however, the specific short-term solutions still need to be considered. It was apparent though, that everyone concurred that the long-term solution is to build a new Shelter.

## **Short Term Solutions – Staff Recommendations:**

### **Hire a Full Time Staff Member:**

The addition of this position will allow the Shelter to have extended hours open to the public and will allow the office to remain open while the Officers are on calls. Anticipated job assignments would include keeping the web site fresh with pictures and descriptions of current animals at the facility, and providing office help with telephone calls, money transactions, and general office duties. In addition, the staff member would handle animals brought into the Shelter by the public as necessary.

### **Extend Hours Open to the Public:**

Hours at the Shelter should be extended to 7:00 p.m. two nights per week. The extended hours make it more convenient for members of the public to adopt animals. The longer the animals are kept at the Shelter, the better the chances for adoption.

**Additional Cages and Kennels:** Space constraints frequently result in euthanasia of animals which might otherwise have been successfully adopted from the Shelter. It is recommended that additional evaluation of space needs be reviewed with staff.

### **Web Site:**

Increase the marketing efforts by investing more time on the web page for adoptions.

### **Task Force:**

Create a Council appointed Task Force comprised of a volunteer from the Shelter, a representative from Animal Friends Connection, a veterinarian, private citizens, and City staff. Task the group with evaluating additional short-term solutions and with providing input into the design and operation of a new Shelter.

### **Regional Study:**

Continue with the regional study being coordinated by San Joaquin County and evaluate results with particular attention to overall North County needs.